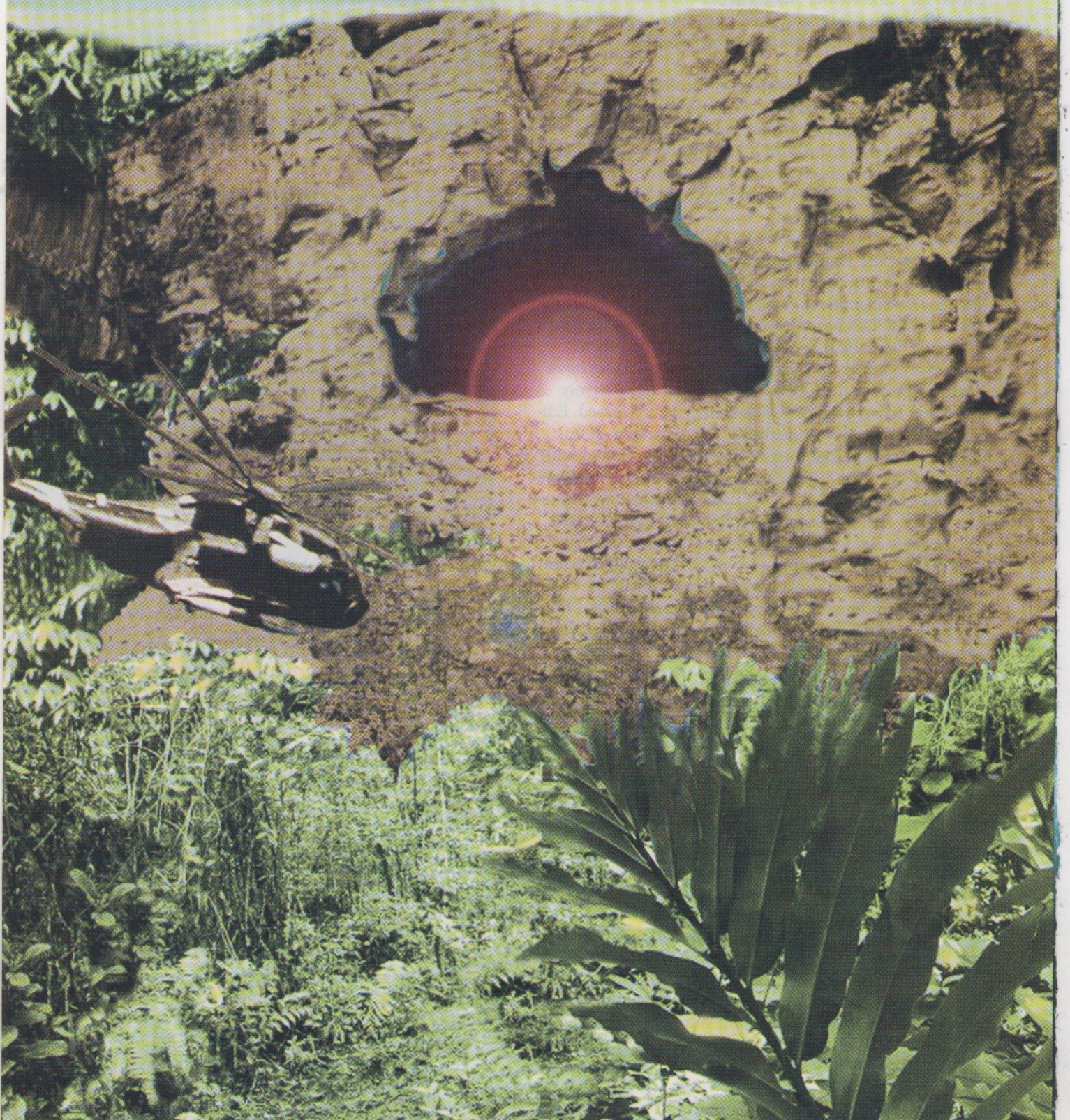
ENCOUNTER IN VIETNAM

BY CLIFFORD STONE



Of the 3.14 million men and women who served in the Vietnam War, an estimated 500,000 have experienced some form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the clinical term for a post-war anxiety syndrome stemming from harsh memories of that unresolved war. Individually, the effects of PTSD can be borne out in anything from vivid nightmares to serious rages and substance abuse problems, even bouts of complete dissociation from reality. Though not a classic victim of PTSD, Clifford Stone has a difficult time putting aside the memories of his own tour of duty in the Nam. A researcher who's spent many of his post-war years making concerted efforts to obtain government records on UFOs, Stone has found his Vietnam wasn't quite like that of his comrades. Besides typical deprivations and traumas that accompanied that war, he experienced an added element known to only a few others, he asserts. Stone claims to have been the Army's UFO specialist, and has recently revealed this bizarre encounter story that, if true, uncovers perhaps the most alien factor present during that brutal conflict. He unravels it for UFO Magazine in his own words.

"Four years of my 22-1/2 years in the military were spent in the Republic of Vietnam. On many occasions during my tenure of service, I was called upon to be the 'official-unofficial' expert in the area of unidentified flying objects. Vietnam was no different. I was involved in things that I just couldn't talk about—that is, until now.

"What I'm about to recount now is just one such event—it's one you may choose to believe or disbelieve—but I know it to be true. I lived it. With that said, I'd like to recount an incident that occurred while in Vietnam, actually one of the first of quite a few incidents that occurred over there.

I can't say it was the Army that had control over this program, because I believe there's another outside agency in control here.

"I didn't keep any notes. It was never my intention to recount any of these stories. It was my intention to carry these stories to the grave with me. But now I feel I have an obligation not only to my family, but to other people as well—those people who have walked down the same path that I have; who have lived this nightmare, and who owe it to their families to tell their stories. I was involved many times over, but others were involved in only one or two occurrences. Even so, I'm sure they, too, had nightmares, and have nightmares. If they haven't told their families the truth, they need to.

"I arrived in Vietnam in January, 1970. I had a plush assignment, the first logistics command. At this stage of the war, you didn't have to worry about getting rocketed all that much. Once in a blue moon you might get a rocket or two, but that was about it. However, I was wild at that time and I had a sense of honor, had a sense I was there to do a good thing for my country.

Before Stone left for Vietnam, the Army had to adequately prepare him for his mission. It was a phase of time spent in a school-like setting which the officers called "Vietnam orientation." There he and his fellow troops were instilled with the proper attitude toward their tours of duty in the Nam, and toward the people of Southeast Asia. They were taught to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. Yet that unity of purpose meant to motivate the American soldiers was belied by the real facts of the war.

ART BY JUDIE PETERSON

"When I got over there, I found out that we separated ourselves from all Vietnamese. Anyone who had slanted eyes was considered the enemy. Anyone of Vietnamese descent was viewed with suspicion. Suffice to say that I got into a little altercation with another soldier, who wound up going to the hospital. I wound up being awakened at about two or three in the morning and told that I was going to a special base camp. I was going to learn enemy identification; I was going to learn how to hate the Vietnamese.

"On my arrival, I was assigned to the 277 S & S Battalion Headquarters Company. I was never trained to be a clerk typist, although that was my MOS. First thing I did was announce to the first sergeant that I really was not good at typing. I immediately requested assignment to a combat unit, but my request was denied.

"This did not stop me from various times crawling out through our, what we called a 'kill zone,' which was a 300-meter area that was cleared in front of our perimeter all the way around the base camp. When crawling out of that kill zone, at nights and every now and then, I'd run into an enemy patrol or something of this sort and I would actually find myself shooting at the enemy and the enemy shooting at me.

"My shift was from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon, leaving my nights free to do with as I wished. On one of those nights in March or early April of 1970, I was doing the job that was assigned to me, working with the communications of the battalion. I was talking to my sergeant when we noticed some strange lights outside of the perimeter, what was known as the Michelin Rubber Plantation. This is a plantation that has a whole lot of rubber trees from which rubber sap was gathered for the Michelin Tire Company.

"These were very unusual lights. They were red, green, blue; they were self-luminous—not like a flare. A flare will go ahead and light the area underneath it. These lights didn't light anything, yet we could see them dancing through the trees, and they'd go to tree-top level. They would blink off from time to time, just like you'd turn off a light. I couldn't do anything about it that night, but the next night, I decided I was going to go on out and try to find the source of the lights. I had two rounds of ammunition and I had my M-16. I proceeded to crawl out an area that I had located within the perimeters that would get me through safely without being shot by my own troops, and proceeded to the area where we saw the lights the night before.

"There is a road that runs parallel to our kill zone and as I started to go ahead and cross the road, I heard a voice cry out, 'You're late, what kept you?' I immediately aimed my M-16 toward the area where I heard the voice. I didn't need a flashlight, I could immediately see; it was a gentleman who was involved in a couple of other situations I had been involved in. I always called him the colonel, because I did not know what his rank was, I did not know what military affiliation he had, if any. All I knew was that when we were involved in some of the recovery or investigation efforts when we were working as a team, this man was the man who was always in charge. This was the man with all the answers, this was the 'man with the plan.' I immediately informed him, 'You're lucky I didn't shoot you.' He smiled and said, 'I don't believe you're here to kill, I believe you would die for your country and you might kill to protect others, but sorry, son, I don't believe you would ever kill just to protect your own life.'

"We walked over to three helicopters that looked like Chinooks, the double-rotor transport choppers we call 'Jolly Greens.' But these had different type of equipment, not geared for war, but for electronic surveillance. As we boarded the helicopters and as we started to leave, I asked the colonel, 'What are you here for? And why am I even flying with you?' He smiled and told me, 'We've got a situation here that we think you can help out with. We uncovered a VC tunnel complex half way up the Black Virgin mountains.'

"Before long, we found an area that was considered a safe landing zone, but I was very concerned—there are other words I could use but we'll say *concerned* for right now—when we landed because I felt sure that Charlie would go ahead and open up with everything he had. But curiously nothing happened. When we landed the colonel said, 'Don't worry about it, it's a dead zone.'

"The entrance to this alleged communist underground complex was located about 150 meters from where we landed. Other troops, U.S. and South Vietnamese, the friendlies, could be seen on the sides of the mountains, and told us they were combing for NVA-VC that were known to be in the area and that they'd be in contact with us as we went in there.

"Normally when you find a tunnel complex, there are multiple entrances. You could seal off one, Charlie had other ways to get out. There was never just one entrance. But when I got to where the entrance of this complex was and the shrubbery was removed, I was shocked. You could drive a truck through that entrance. We shined our flashlights on the side and the top of the tunnel. The rock wasn't chipped away like you would see with air tools, an air hammer. It was smooth all the way around, and shiny black. It was very, very smooth. We walked down the tunnel and kept in communication with our radios, but when we got back far enough, our radio started to die. We immediately went ahead and connected up a field telephone, ran the wire back and kept it going with us so we could keep in contact with the surface.

"As we got back to say maybe 100 meters or so, we noticed our flashlights were going dead and that our field radio was not working the way

JUDIE PETERSON

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it should. We moved to a spot where it would work properly. If you were to draw a line in the sand, just outside of that line the telephone would work, but inside the line, it wouldn't work; nor would our flashlights. Anything electric would not work the way it was suppose to. We really didn't need our lights, though we were far inside this tunnel. It was night, but we did not need our lights. We could see.

"We left a three man team there to man the telephone and we proceeded into the cave. As we walked farther in, the surroundings became brighter and brighter, which just wasn't normal. We kept trying to tell ourselves that any time now we could run into NVA and have a fire fight right inside that tunnel. The tunnel entrance was huge; as I said before, you could drive a truck through it. It was the type of installation we should have detected a long time before this, because it would have taken a long time to construct and some equipment which we would have heard at work. Yet according to the colonel, this complex was just discovered within the last two or three days of our arrival.

JUDIE PETERSON

"As we proceeded into the cave, we soon came to a big opening which now was a big room. As we stepped into this room, it was like walking into a light bulb. But you couldn't make out anything in the room, even the roughly 25 to 30 soldiers that were with us. If a man was 10 feet away from you, you could only make out his dark silhouette.

"We started to disperse in the room. Everyone was anxious; the colonel stayed close to me. I told him that I did not have a good feeling about going in. The hair on the napes of our necks stood up, then the hair all over our bodies. It was like we had entered into something that was electrified. I initially associated this with the genuine fear that I felt at the time. We had to fire at an enemy in this room. How could we tell the difference between our people and the enemy?"

It dawned on Stone and possibly other soldiers that Charlie could not have done this. It was something that was not of this world, and Stone expressed these feelings to the colonel, that in his opinion, the better part of valor would be to withdraw. "Blow it up if you want to, but we shouldn't be there," was his feeling.

"We finally saw a glow, like a green glow, coming from roughly an area of 15 to 18 inches by maybe 3 feet. The colonel and I walked over to it and there, like holographic images, were dials, gauges and what appeared to be control buttons. But it was just a flat surface, and it was glowing green. As we gazed at it, the colonel suggested that I touch it. Can't use the words that I shouted at the colonel at this time, but I thought it was kind of ridiculous that anyone touch those knobs!

"Eventually, I overcame my fear and start to run my hand lightly over the area without actually touching the surface—just holding my hand over what appeared to be, for lack of a better term, buttons. When I did this, the lights in this tavern went up from where you couldn't make out anything to visibility somewhat like twilight. We could see that the light was emanating from the wall. The walls made a very huge but perfect cube. Over on one side sat some type of craft. It was cigar shaped, none of the doors were open that I could see, but it had windows and coming from inside the windows was a light . . .I'll use the term 'arc welders blue.' It was a beautiful blue color. The ship was black. A shiny, black substance.

"This was no ordinary room. This was a laboratory of some sort. A biological laboratory, for lack of a better term. There were what appeared to me organs, human organs , hearts, lungs, livers, skeleton structures and also cadavers of what I took to be American service members, Vietnamese, and even some unearthly. Not your typical greys, although some would fit that description fairly well, with the large heads, spindly bodies, the arms. But there were other creatures that I could not catalog. I would have to state that were not of this earth. Humanoid in appearance.

"We found glass apparatus, what I took for glass test tubes, and when I dropped one, it didn't break. The colonel was later to tell me that if you were to fire at one of these glass test tubes, it still wouldn't break. It would be able to withstand about as much impact as six to eight inches of armor plating. That's how strong

this so-called glass was.

"We noticed that over by where the ship was, the walls became crystal clear. We could see the night sky. We couldn't see any trees or grass or earth. We could just see out on the night skies. Then the troops that were on the outside doing patrol, we could see them walk right over, like they were walking right on air. They couldn't see in. We sent a runner back to call out if the troops were actually there, in that location. As a matter of fact we had them do some things, some motions to us so we could tell that these were the troops. It appeared as though they were just walking on thin air. We asked if they could see anything peculiar about the ground. To them it was just earth. There were trees there, but we didn't see the trees. There was vegetation there, but we didn't see the vegetation. For all intents and purposes, they were walking on air. It got to the point where we were laughing about this, but it was a nervous laughter, because we knew we were confronting something that we knew couldn't possibly be of Charlie, of communist origin—even though we were being told by the colonel and several other people there who were in charge that this was the case.

"We went ahead and further played with the little control panel there. The colonel at this time had already started to give instructions to the troops there to start carrying out everything that could be carried out. We found that the casings in which the organs were in were made out of the same substance as what I called test tubes and the other apparent glass apparatus in the area. Others made several trips while the colonel and I still played with the control panel, trying to figure out how to disconnect it.

"Finally I decided to try and just lift it up. Once I did, a buzzing sound went off. The side that was clearly open went out; we could no longer see outside of the cave. Immediately some red lights like beams flights, really thin, like the size of lead in a #2 pencil, started to shine out. I got hit in the eye with one these. It was very painful when I got hit. I turned around and it felt like my back as on fire. I can remember screaming out. I can remember hearing other screams. Everything that went on in the cave from this event on, I can't remember. I would have to say that I passed out."

JUDIE PETERSON

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When Stone came to, he was outside the entrance to the cave. Soldiers carried him back to the helicopter, and before long he was back at the hospital, where a doctor examined his injured eye. In extreme pain, his back and arms spasming, Stone was told to return the next day for further examination. They patched up his eye, and as he was getting ready to leave, the colonel returned.

"He told me to follow him. He took me to a Quonset hut, that was adjacent to the hospital, and introduced me to another doctor. While we sat there the colonel said, 'This is very important, Sgt. Stone and I want you to try to remember. Do you remember talking to anyone inside, inside the cave while we were in there?'

" 'Yes sir, I talked to you. You know everything that was said.'

"He said, 'No, did you have any conversations, did you sense anything?' I asked, 'What are you talking about?' He said, bluntly, 'Sgt. Stone did you have any sense of any alien presence or did you have any conversations with, shall we say, beings not of this world? Do you have any impressions of that?' I told him that all I could really recall was that when the beam of red light hit my eye, I felt excruciating pain and it still bothered me . . . and that it was as though I was on fire. I could remember feeling like my back was burning, like I had got hit with napalm.

"The colonel then told me that the doctor was going to give me a shot to help me recall the events that happened in there, that aren't clear in my mind. I said it just happened, I remember everything. 'Didn't I just tell you what happened prior to my passing out?' I asked him. He got a weird look on his face and said, 'Sergeant you didn't pass out. There are other events that occurred that are not coming through. We all were out, but you were down. Let me explain to you that we need to know what happened during that 45 minutes or so that you were away from us. You were still in the room, we were not there.'

"I did not like this, I didn't like being made a guinea pig; something was wrong. I would have remembered if something had happened in there. So I told the colonel that I want to remember everything if anything comes out with you giving me the shot. I want it to come out, I don't want it to be blocked in the back of my mind. I want to know what happened. The colonel went ahead and said, OK, 'But remember sergeant, you can't prove anything. I'm going to tell you now that the events of this night never occurred. You are not to mention this to your mother, your father, your best friend not even to your dog. But I will ensure that nothing is kept from *you*. After all we'll probably be wanting your services again.' To this I smiled and said, would you mind telling me what the hell service I'm providing? All I'm doing is being there with you. He said, 'Oh, no, no, you know more about this than even you *know* that you know!' To this day I don't understand that statement.

"The doctor then gave me a shot. I started to recall that immediately after getting hit in the eye with the light and the burning and going down, I didn't pass out. I was in a lot of pain, I was in tremendous pain. Then a lot of. . . well fine, I (now) have a fascination with grasshoppers, and I guess this is the incident that causes that—these creatures of humanoid shape started to appear. I can remember looking into their faces. These were like big grasshoppers, and I can remember going ahead, picking up my M-16, and at that time I was going to shoot. One of them went ahead and grabbed my M-16, but I wouldn't let go and then I heard a voice that I've heard many times befor, even through my childhood. I never wanted to bring this up, but it's got to be brought up in my life story, and it's got to be brought up *now*. One of the entities that I've always known told me that they had to take care of my eye or I would lose it, that I'd lose my sight. But it would still be sore for a couple of days, and that my people could go ahead and treat it with medications that they had available to them. Once again I was asked, as I was asked several other times before by these creatures, 'Why are you here, and what are you doing here? This isn't your nature, you should not be involved in this, what they call a war.'

"That's all I could recall. But I'd still be drilled, because the colonel still wanted to know what other exchanges were made. But when I came out from under the sedation, I remembered that contact vividly, but nothing else. When I got ready to leave there, the colonel went ahead and took me back, just outside of my unit location. He informed me that if anyone was to ask, I got injured by an insect. As far as the burns on my back, that was a sunburn. At that time, you could get an Article 15 or even court marshaled for a sunburn. All they had to do was prove that you were trying to avoid duty. Well, not being the type of person to sloth off, I didn't try to avoid duty.

"My captain demanded that I go see a doctor about my eye, so I did. When I went there, the doctor went ahead and bandaged it up, same doctor I saw before and he said, 'I knew they'd be sending you back over here to find out what was wrong.' See, an insect had sprayed something in my eye and cut the retina of my eye. So I was bandaged up with no problem.

"A couple of days later, I was asked to meet the colonel in our NCO Club. We talked about the events of that night. He told me that nothing else was to be said, and informed me that there were troops who were not directly involved in the bizarre things that myself or the other members of the composite team were involved in, but were aware of the unusual equipment coming out. There was no way to cover up the burns on me or the fact that my eye was messed up by something on the inside. He

informed me that the effective cover story, should it be necessary to come out with it, was that they did in fact uncover an underground location that was brought about by elements of the 88th NVA division, 347th NVA Brigade, who were working on an aspect of producing the bubonic plague to introduce to specific base camps, to inflict biological casualties among the American forces—even the South Vietnamese forces. This naturally was not the case, this was a cover story.

I was still very much concerned about the bodies that we saw there. The colonel didn't want to answer the questions, but he knew that this really troubled me. I'd have to say that the colonel had some compassion, because he decided to go ahead and tell me before his departure that some of the organs and some of the bodies were synthetic. I went ahead and explained that I saw wounds on some of the bodies that appeared to be both Vietnamese and American G.I.s. He informed me that all the bodies of human origin had in fact been extracted from the cave and that the proper identities had been made and that some of those were in fact G.I.s that had been killed. But not by the aliens—by actual combat, and that apparently whomever our visitors were, whomever our spectators were, they were curious. What that curiosity is, he had no idea. But there was no effort on the part of the entities to stop us from recovering our dead.

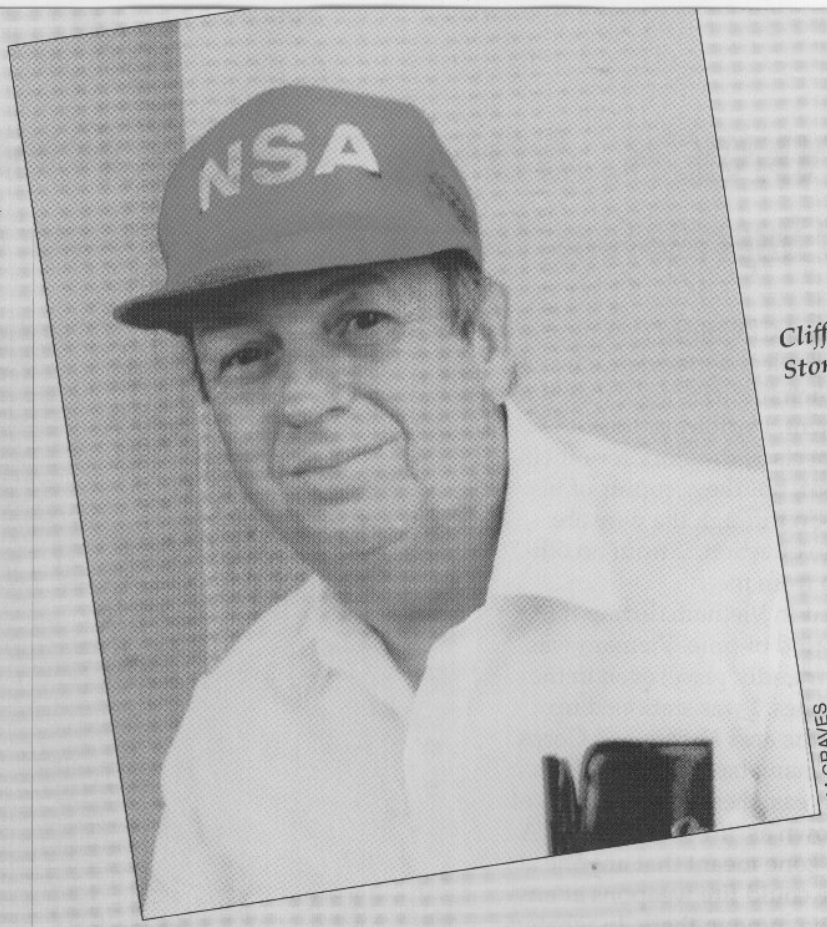
"He said that the bodies had been sent to some place in Hawaii, where there was some registration and identification service, as well as another unit that did forensics to determine cause of death and to ensure that the death was brought about by the wounds that they received in combat and not by anything that was done by our spectators, the entities of unknown origin. Again he assured me that really happened was that these people had in fact been killed, not by alien visitors, but by the horrors of war.

"Then I went back to my normal duties. I was put on the midnight to eight o'clock shift to prevent me from crawling out of the kill zone any more. My sergeant actually thought I was going to see the woman who later became my wife, which was not the case. I spent the rest of my time there at the base camp.

"Within a week I got an excruciating pain down my back, but couldn't explain what was causing it. Once again, I had to go back to the doctor, they looked me over, but had no idea what was going on. I was then told that I was going to be aerovaced back to the United States. At this time, I didn't want that to happen—there was this woman I wanted to marry—so what I did was go ahead and . . . well I guess you might say, I resisted. This resulted in me being strapped to a stretcher. When the aero evac chopper picked me up to take me to the 12th evac, I was strapped in. Again with the colonel, I went on to a doctor, one of the colonel's team members who checked me out. Another doctor wrote up the report stating that my problem was kidney stones. Then they were talking about sending me to Hawaii for further testing, and while they were talking about this, I went ahead and told the colonel that I wasn't ready to leave at this time. While they were talking, I just walked on off, caught a ride and went on back to the base.

"A couple of days later, I was visited by the colonel and he wanted to know why I took off like I did.

"So, there you have most of what happened. I firmly believe that these stories have to come out and be told. As I said, it's not just me but every person involved in these incidents that doesn't wish to make their story public. They do need to go ahead and make the story known to those whom they love so they'll understand why sometimes those of us that were involved act strange. We lived a nightmare. A nightmare that our government wants us to carry to our graves and never let our loved ones know that we ever lived."



Clifford Stone

JIM GRAVES

Stone's Adventure: Risky Business

First impressions from a fellow Vietnam vet

By Don Ecker

I read Cliff Stone's account of an alleged experience in Vietnam with a great deal of amazement. I will leave the UFO-alien aspects of the story for others to sort out, but the accounts of his derring-do through the wire are subject to question, if from no others, then from me.

I served in Vietnam during the same period of time. Vietnam was never a friendly place, even in the best of times. I was stationed up north in the area known as I-Corps. Around many bases, especially in remote areas, there were sections of land known as "free-fire zones." A free-fire zone meant that anyone at any time could fire weapons at anything seen moving there. In whatever strange mind that made the rules, anything within the geographical boundaries of a free-fire zone was "fair game." There are true accounts of American troops visually sighting platoon- or battalion-sized groups of VC or NVA (Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army) moving through areas that were not free-fire zones, and orders had to be received back from headquarters for permission to fire at them. It was ironic that a soldier could shoot anything at all, from people to water buffalo, civilians, soldiers whatever, in a free-fire zone and nobody said a word— but if the intended target was *not* in a free-fire zone, they had better have been shooting at you first before you capped off a round, or you could be court-martialed.

This is where I think Stone's story breaks down: The idea that a single, unaccompanied American soldier would go crawling out through the wire, by himself, to play tag with the NVA or VC, and not have any sanction from above strikes me as patently ridiculous; the reason being if you got into trouble, there was no one to help you. You could not radio for assistance, you would be outnumbered, could be shot, killed or captured, and no one would know what happened to you. Not to mention the specter of LBJ. No, not President Lyndon Johnson, but the Long Binh Jail, a notorious place where court-martialed GIs were often sent. Every GI was aware of this in-country LBJ. If Stone, as he indicates, had a reputation for crawling outside the wire into a free-fire zone, where his own guys could "light him up" (a euphemism for putting a burst of fire from an M-60 up his keister) or Charlie might give him a "free" circumcision, he was at the very least looking at an Article 15 (non-judicial punishment) or perhaps a courts-martial, for disobeying orders. Especially if he were AWOL (Absent Without Official Leave) for more than a day or so, he would have some tall explaining to do, with or without wounds or injuries.

Don Ecker (second from left) and some of his Army buddies in Vietnam.

Of course, Vietnam was a very strange place and strange things did happen there. Looking back almost 30 years ago, by far the strangest thing to me is the fact that I volunteered to go there. (I guess age does bestow wisdom.) But it stretches the imagination and mere common sense, in even the most naive military person or the most gung-ho risk taker, to picture a man willingly venturing into a free-fire zone in South Vietnam during that surreal war.

Don Ecker spent two years in Southeast Asia as a member of the United States Army Security Agency, Special Operations.